A Home Remodeler’s TOOL KIT

You can’t bring your workshop to the jobsite. The next best thing is to bring a useful selection of tools.

By Tim Snyder

I’d like to say that I’ve done more woodworking than home renovation, but it wouldn’t be true. What I do know for sure is that the right angles and straight edges you take for granted in woodworking can be hard to find in home remodeling. It’s wise to expect the unexpected. There are other concerns, too—like electrical wiring, rotten framing and big, rusty nails that can’t be pulled without a lot of leverage. Coping with these conditions is a lot easier if you have the right tools. The gear featured here has helped me through years of home renovation. There are plenty of items I’ve left out, but this core kit will help you get through a wide range of remodeling tasks. You’ll find a complete tool list in the Buyer’s Guide on p. 66. If you want to build your own version of my remodeler’s tool stool, the project begins on p. 26.

6-in-1 tool
Open a paint can, or tap it closed with the hammer end. Clean a paint roller, spread wood filler, scrape off dried glue, or pry off some window casing. This little tool will do it all.

Paintbrushes
Whether you’re touching up a wall repair or cutting in around trim, good paintbrushes make it easier to get first-rate results. Have at least one tapered brush for cutting in and reaching tight spots.

Multi-bit screwdriver
A small multi-bit screwdriver packs a lot of fastening punch, enabling you to handle torx, Phillips and square drive screws. As a bonus, the hex-head bits are interchangeable with those in your drill and driver set (see p. 33).

Folding utility knife
I like this folding version. It’s compact, equipped with a belt clip, and able to store an extra blade in the handle.
Nail sets
Nail sets don’t take up a lot of room, and can do useful work besides setting nails, like helping to free frozen nuts. It’s smart to get a set of 3: $\frac{1}{32}$", $\frac{1}{16}$" and $\frac{3}{32}$".

Prying tools
Remodeling involves plenty of pulling and prying. A sturdy cat’s paw is essential for nail extraction. As for pry bars, it helps to have a few sizes, so you can handle everything from removing delicate trim to dismantling a built-up beam.

Heavy hammer
Carpentry and remodeling require more pounding power than woodworking. A 20 oz. hammer with a flat face and a straight claw is just the ticket.

Adjustable pliers
If you can’t carry around a socket set, the next-best-thing is a pair of adjustable pliers.

What’s Missing?
This article just scratches the surface of all the tools that can help out in different remodeling projects. Email us at editor@woodcraftmagazine.com to share your own recommendations, and to learn more about the tool stool.
The right gear gets you set to measure, drill, cut, shape, shave, and fasten

**25’ tape measure**
Shorter versions are fine for furnituremaking, but for remodeling, you need a 25’ tape measure. The erasable writing surface on this FastCap model stores measurements that I’ll otherwise forget.

**Plastic squares**
Light, rugged, and inexpensive, a plastic square gets angles right and also serves as a cutoff guide for your circular saw. It’s worth it to have small and large versions.

**Standing bevel gauge**
Most houses are full of odd angles. It’s easy to transfer them if you’ve got one of these infinitely adjustable tools.

**Torpedo level**
2” and 4’ levels are good to have on hand, but you can’t beat a torpedo level for portability and versatility. Match it up with a straight-edged board, and this tiny level can work like a longer version.
Low angle block plane
Invest in a premium plane to use as your all-purpose shaver and shaper. Keep a spare blade on hand, in case of damage.

Drill & drive bit set
Hex-shank, drill and drive bit sets are huge time-savers, enabling you to change bits in an instant. For maximum versatility, get a set that includes a variety of drill bits and screwdriving tips. The driving tips can also be used in your multi-bit screwdriver.

Fasteners aplenty
A plastic case like this can’t possibly hold all the screws, drywall anchors and nails you need, but it’s a good start.

Utility chisels
Instead of dinging the edges of your good chisels on remodeling projects, get a set of utility chisels to put in harm’s way. This 4-chisel WoodRiver set is a bargain at $39.99.

4-in-hand rasp
This tiny tool won’t take up much room in your toolbox, and it puts plenty of shaping and filing power in your hand.
The bottom drawer is packed!

Stud finder
Without a stud finder, it’s frustrating and time-consuming to locate framing members hidden by drywall.

Voltage detector
Always turn off the power if you’re working around electrical wiring. But use a voltage tester like this to be doubly sure you’re not at risk. Touching the tester’s tip to wiring or inserting it into a receptacle will tell you if electrical current is present.

Electrician’s pliers
Once you make sure the power’s off, these multifunction electrician’s pliers will enable you to tackle a variety of wiring tasks.

Allen wrench set
Allen-head screws are used on hardware, tools, and furniture, so you definitely need a wrench set. This WERA set stays together in a handy holder. It’s smart to have metric and imperial sets.

Kreg Automaxx clamp
Need a third hand? This fast-action clamp is the answer. It automatically adjusts to different thicknesses. Clamping pressure is also adjustable. Kreg’s 3” model fits nicely in the toolbox.

Folding saw
Compact but capable, a folding saw can handle plenty of cutting assignments that are too small or fussy for power tool cutting.
Oscillating multitool
What this power tool lacks in size, it more than makes up for in precise cutout and plunge-cut capability. Make sure to keep a variety of different blades on hand.

Auger bits
These aggressive bits meet home renovation’s boring requirements, quickly powering through framing lumber.

LED Flashlight
Low light is a common problem in remodeling work, but an LED flashlight provides a bright solution. This SLYDE model really shines because it pulls apart to expose a powerful floodlight. And with a magnetized end, it will pick up spilled tacks or stand in place on metal duct work.

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Scribing tool
Installing built-in cabinetry often requires some scribe-fitting. This simple scribing tool makes it easy to transfer an irregular wall or floor surface to your workpiece.

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